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*Chapter V*

# LAW, FEUDING, AND WAR

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I was born to die fighting.

*Jivaro saying*

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On an abstract level, there is near unanimity among the interior Jívaro as to what is correct, normative social behavior. In any specific case, however, there is usually radical disagreement as to whether a particular anti-social act was justified as a punitive sanction in reprisal for some past offense, or whether it was, in fact, an unjustified act which itself deserves the application of retaliatory punitive sanctions. This situation, of course, is quite understandable in a society where there is no state, no chiefdom, no corporate kin groups, and, really, no locus of authority which can impose judicial decisions and enforce them.

An additional factor of no minor significance is that a high proportion of persons who have been accused of hostile acts probably did not commit them at all, but there is no way of satisfactorily demonstrating their "guilt" or "innocence." This situation is primarily due to the tremendous emphasis among the Jívaro on ascribing almost all non-epidemic illnesses and deaths, and non-violent deaths, to witchcraft and poisoning. The fundamental assumption, not surprising in the absence of modern medical knowledge and in the presence of the tensions previously discussed, is that bewitching shamans are continually attacking one's person and family. This leads, in the cases of assumed witchcraft death, to punitive retaliatory sanctions, in the form of homicide, against the presumed

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